

Contact: Lauren Rollins (312-729-3607)

**SOUTH EUGENE HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE OREGON GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY RUNNER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (January 10, 2013) — In its 28th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with USA TODAY High School Sports, today announced Sara Tsai of South Eugene High School as its 2012-13 Gatorade Oregon Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Tsai is the first Gatorade Oregon Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from South Eugene High School.

The award, which recognizes not only outstanding athletic excellence, but also high standards of academic achievement and exemplary character demonstrated on and off the racecourse, distinguishes Tsai as Oregon's best high school girls cross country runner. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year award to be announced in January, Tsai joins an elite alumni association of past state award-winners in 12 sports, including Ryan Hall (1999-00, 2000-01, Big Bear HS, Calif.), Derek Jeter (1991-92, Kalamazoo HS, Mich.), Candace Parker (2001-02, Naperville Central HS, Ill.), Abby Wambach (1997-98, Our Lady of Mercy, N.Y.) and Mark Sanchez (2004-05, Mission Viejo HS, Calif.).

The 5-foot-4 sophomore raced to the Class 6A individual state championship this past season with a time of 17:42. The state's returning Gatorade Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year, Tsai finished fifth at the Nike Cross Nationals Northwest Regional championships in 17:59.1 and crossed the line in 11th place at the NXN Final with a time of 19:52.

Tsai has maintained a 4.0 GPA in the classroom. She has volunteered locally on behalf of youth soccer programs and the American Cancer Society's Relay for Life.

"Along with being a great runner, Sara is humble, kind and balanced," said South Eugene head coach Jeff Hess. "She is the perfect ambassador for the sport and a benefit to any group she is part of."

Tsai will begin her junior year of high school this fall.

The [Gatorade Player of the Year](#) program annually recognizes one winner in the District of Columbia and each of the 50 states that sanction high school football, girls volleyball, boys and girls cross country, boys and girls basketball, boys and girls soccer, baseball, softball, and boys and girls track & field, and awards one National Player of the Year in each sport. The selection process is administered by the Gatorade high school sports leadership team in partnership with [USA TODAY High School Sports](#), which work with top sport-specific experts and a media advisory board of accomplished, veteran prep sports journalists to determine the state winners in each sport.

Tsai joins Gatorade Oregon Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Annamarie Maag (2010-11 & 2009-10, Jesuit High School), and Taylor Wallace (2008-09 & 2007-08, Henley), as athletes who have won the cross country award since its inception in 2007.

To keep up to date on the latest happenings, become a fan of Gatorade Player of the Year on Facebook and follow us on Twitter. For more on the Gatorade Player of the Year program, including nomination information, a complete list of past winners and the announcement of the Gatorade National Player of the Year, visit playeroftheyear.gatorade.com.

###